

Q&A HOW PARENTS AND EDUCATORS CAN HELP CHILDREN OVERCOME SHYNESS AND GROW CONFIDENTLY.

FOR PARENTS



Q How can I help my toddler overcome shyness?

Some toddlers are naturally shy or slow to warm up to others. They may stay close to their parents outside of home or when meeting someone new. At the playground, they may hang back and watch other children before playing by themselves at the corner.

These behaviours stem from your child's temperament or inborn qualities. It takes more time for some children to observe and think through new situations before feeling comfortable enough to speak up or participate. Try these strategies to support your child:

1. **Avoid labelling.** Instead of describing a child as "shy" which suggests a fixed trait, say "slow to warm up" which suggests change is possible.
2. **Use gentle encouragement.** A warm and reassuring tone helps toddlers feel less fearful or wary about new situations or unfamiliar people. On the first day of preschool, you can say, "It looks scary because there are many children in the room. Let's stand and see for a while before we go in together."
3. **Provide safe opportunities.** Watch your toddler for clues on his readiness to join in a new activity, and then help him gradually adjust. Wait for your child to show interest in the kiddie pool. Gently suggest sitting at the corner of the pool with him and dipping your toes in the water first.

Q How can educators help children work and play cooperatively in a group?

Children's everyday experiences with people around them are fundamental for developing social skills. Important social skills such as turn-taking, sharing and listening are being developed as they observe and learn from more socially-adept adults or peers. An environment for cooperative play does not occur by chance, but is planned and encouraged.

- > **Model social behaviours.** Children have to see that our actions reflect our words. Instead of just telling them to play together, play along with them.
- > **Identify opportunities for collaboration.** Select an artwork that children can complete together or get them to put away their toys. Group projects encourage them to share ideas and develop listening skills. Getting praised for their effort makes them more likely to develop a helpful disposition.
- > **Encourage children to walk in another's shoes.** When they share stories about their friends or siblings, ask them: "How would you feel if it happened to you?" or "What would you say or do?" This will help them relate better with people.
- > **Include role play when designing learning experiences.** It sets the stage for perspective-taking and cooperative play. When acting out a story about teamwork, for instance, ask questions such as "How did they solve the problem together?" so that children can reflect on the benefits of cooperating with others.

FOR EDUCATORS



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